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Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex CECRA Pro
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July 1993

Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex CECRA Program Site Update

By the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences

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Site Background

The Upper Blackfoot Mining Complex (UBMC) is located near Highway 200 in the headwaters region of the Blackfoot River approximately 16 miles east of Lincoln, Montana. The site includes, but is not limited to, the Anaconda, Mary P., Edith, Mike Horse, Lower and Upper Carbonate, and Paymaster mine areas and the Mike Horse Tailings Dam and Reservoir. The site is also known as the Heddleston Mining District. Mining and milling activities occurred sporadically at the site from the late 1800s to the early 1960s. Acid mine drainage from adits and metal migration from various mining wastes have resulted in arsenic and metals contamination of surface water, groundwater, and soils at the site.

In June 1991, the Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences (MDHES) identified ASARCO Incorporated (ASARCO) and the Atlantic Richfield Company (ARCO) as potentially liable persons under the Montana Comprehensive Environmental Cleanup and Responsibility Act (CECRA). Informal discussions about investigation and cleanup of the site occurred between MDHES and ARCO/ASARCO for several months. In February of 1992, MDHES began formal negotiations with ARCO/ASARCO on an administrative order on consent (consent order) for performance of a remedial investigation/feasibility study (RI/FS). Negotiations ended in July 1992 without the parties reaching a consent order.

As a part of the negotiations, ARCO/ASARCO prepared draft RI /FS planning documents, including a July 1992 Draft Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan and a July 1992 Draft Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan. In an effort to expedite the RI/FS process, MDHES chose to submit the Draft Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan and the Draft Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan to the public for comment. The public comment period was held from July 27, 1992 through August 25, 1992. During the public comment period an informational public meeting and a formal public hearing were held. MDHES prepared the Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan and the Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan (April 1993). To the maximum extent possible, public comment was incorporated into these documents. The Final Work Plan and the Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan are available for review in the MDHES CECRA Program site file and at the Lincoln Community Library.

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Remedial Investigation and Feasibility Study Status

Although agreement was not reached on the consent order, initial RI/FS activities were conducted by ARCO/ASARCO at the UBMC. In the fall of 1992, ARCO/ASARCO conducted most of the sampling activities outlined in the July 1992 Draft Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan. These activities included sampling of mine waste, tailings, surrounding surface soils, and soils underlying mine wastes at the Anaconda, Mary P., Edith, Mike Horse, Lower and Upper Carbonate, and Paymaster mine areas. Additional sampling activities included installation of four piezometers (groundwater monitoring devices) and five groundwater wells, rather than just the two groundwater wells proposed in the July 1992 Draft Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan.

Four groundwater wells and four piezometers were sampled in November 1992. In February 1993, three groundwater wells and four piezometers were sampled by ARCO/ASARCO. All groundwater monitoring wells and piezometers sampled during the February sampling event contained elevated levels of aluminum, iron, and manganese.

As a result of voluntary actions proposed by ARCO/ASARCO at the Lower Carbonate and Mike Horse mine areas, MDHES has determined that it will not issue an administrative order under CECRA for performance of the RI/FS at the site for the time being. Consequently, MDHES will not, at this time, require ARCO/ASARCO to implement the April 1993 Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan or to prepare and implement a Phase II Sampling and Analysis Plan. Any performance of RI/FS actions at the site will be on a voluntary basis by ARCO/ASARCO. If at any time in the future MDHES determines it is appropriate to issue orders under CECRA, it retains the ability to do so.

1993 Proposed Voluntary Activities

ARCO/ASARCO have submitted proposals to MDHES for three voluntary interim remedial actions. The three proposals are titled:

- UBMC Mike Horse Adit Drainage Treatability Study Work Plan (April 1993)
- UBMC Mike Horse Mine Infiltration Control Treatability Study Work Plan (April 1993)
- Carbonate Mine UBMC Identification of Remedial Action and Work Plan for Implementation of Remedial Action (April 1993).

The Mike Horse Mine treatability studies involve treatment of acid mine drainage flowing from the Mike Horse adit and diversion of surface water from the Mike Horse underground workings in an effort to decrease the flow of acid mine drainage from the Mike Horse adit portal. The Lower Carbonate mine removal action involves the relocation of tailings and waste rock from the Lower Carbonate to the Upper Carbonate. The voluntary interim remedial actions are proposed to begin in August and/or September of 1993. The treatability studies will continue into the future as described in the proposals. MDHES commented on the three

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proposals by letter to ARCO/ASARCO on May 6, 1993. Copies of the three proposals and the MDHES comments can be reviewed in the MDHES CECRA Program site files and at the Lincoln Community Library.

Because the proposed interim remedial actions are not subject to an administrative order from MDHES at this time, and are being conducted on a voluntary basis by ARCO/ASARCO, MDHES will not approve or disapprove of the actions. ARCO/ASARCO will initiate and conduct the remedial actions and will be responsible for meeting all legal requirements, such as obtaining the necessary permits. MDHES has requested that ARCO/ASARCO keep MDHES and the public informed about the voluntary interim remedial actions and fund MDHES monitoring and oversight activities. The ASARCO project manager for the voluntary interim remedial actions is Chris Pfahl, and the ARCO project manager is Phyllis Flack.

Want To Know More?

The complete UBMC site file is available for public review between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday through Friday, except state holidays, at the CECRA Program office, 616 Helena Avenue, Room 209, Helena, MT. Selected documents are available for review at the Lincoln Community Library include: Draft Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan, Draft Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan, Final Remedial Investigation/Feasibility Study Work Plan, Final Phase I Sampling and Analysis Plan, interim remedial action work plans and MDHES comments on the interim remedial action work plans. The Lincoln Community Library (located on Hwy 200) hours are Monday 4:30-8:30 p.m., Tuesday 1:00-5:00 p.m., Wednesday 1:30-6:30 p.m., and Thursday 9:30 a.m.-2:30 p.m.

If you have any questions or would like more information about the site please contact Judy Reese, the MDHES UBMC project manager, at 1-800-648-8465 or 443-5827, 616 Helena Avenue, Room 209, Helena, MT 59620.

Are you on our mailing list?

If you did not receive this UBMC Site Update by mail and would like to be on the site mailing list, please complete this form and send it to Jane Heath Stiles, Montana Department of Health and Environmental Sciences, Cogswell Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620.

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